

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

MicroMetl West

Nevada Industry Excellence

MicroMetl Establishes Lean Culture

Client Profile:

MicroMetl West, founded in 1965 as General Sheet Metal, produces curbs and specialty sheet metal products/systems for the Heating, Ventilating and Air Conditioning (HVAC) industry. MicroMetl West employs 92 people at its facility in Sparks, Nevada.

Situation:

MicroMetl West operates in a highly competitive, price sensitive market. Current economic conditions intensified the challenges to remain profitable and financially viable. MicroMetl employees had periodically attended Nevada Industry Excellence (NVIE), a NIST MEP network affiliate, Lean Certification, Lean 101 and ISO Auditor Workshops and determined that incorporating these state-of-the-art practices would be critical to their continued success. After consulting with NVIE, MicroMetl West Plant Manager Casey Nichols and Quality Assurance Manager Bill Martin recognized that a successful Lean implementation would require engaging and empowering all workers to be responsible and involved in the continuous improvement process.

Solution:

NVIE proposed a two-phased implementation process tailored for MicroMetl. Phase 1 included all employees participating in more than 2,000 man-hours of training in Lean English Essentials (preparatory training in Lean principles for employees with limited English proficiency), Anglo Culture, Hispanic Culture and Spanish for Supervisors training sessions, culminating in a series of Lean 101 Workshops. Phase 2 of the implementation will include training a nine-member team from MicroMetl West to apply Lean techniques through targeted implementations of Value Stream Mapping (VSM), 5S (Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain), application of Takt time, balanced flow, quality mapping, set-up reduction, documentation and deployment of standard work, cellularization and facilities planning. NVIE also worked with MicroMetl West to secure a training grant for the project funded by the Workforce Investment Act and administered by Nevadaworks, a state workforce development agency. Plant Manager Nichols said, "One of the biggest challenges we faced in our plant has been the language barrier with our Hispanic workforce. NVIE took the time to educate our work force to understand the cultural difference. Lean is the elimination of waste and not the elimination of jobs, and this understanding has tremendously helped advance the implementation of our Lean manufacturing project at MicroMetl West." Nichols continued by saying, "We found there were differences between the way our 1st shift and 2nd shift would assemble the same product and this was very noticeable. So we took the time and evaluated each shifts process and took the best of both shifts and set up standard work based on the best practices. Now both shifts are building this product more efficiently."

Results:

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- * Increased sales by \$85,000.
- * Retained sales of \$225,000.
- * Realized \$10,000 in cost savings
- * Reduced operational expense by 3 percent.
- * Increased production by 7 percent.
- * Reduced labor by 21 percent.
- * Retained 25 jobs.

Testimonial:

"With the continuing support and encouragement from the people at Nevada Industrial Excellence, we are confident that MicroMetl West will continue to be successful in developing the tools needed to excel in today's market place. Nevada Industry Excellence is a great business partner and we look forward to our next project with them."

Casey Nichols, Plant Manager